(e) the response of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) A formal invitation for an India visit was extended to Prime Minister of Israel on February 4, 2003.

(c) No.

(d) and (e) Do not arise.

India's stand on Tibet

495. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has changed its stand that the Autonomous Region of Tibet is now recognised as a part of People's Republic of China;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) if not, what stand was taken by India during the Prime Minister's recent visit to China?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) There is no change in India's position on Tibet.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) In the Declaration on Principle for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation signed by the two Prime Ministers on June 23, 2003, it is stated that "the Indian side recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China".

Changes in VISA Rules by U.S.A.

496. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAJRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the U.S. Government has made visa rules more stringent this year resulting in delay in admission of the Indian students in American Universities;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the revised visa guidelines would result in prolonged delay of the Indian students in reaching the campus; and

(d) if so, whether the matter has been taken up with the appropriate authorities for corrective action?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) For reasons of security in the context of the events of 11th September, 2001, the U.S. government has begun to implement on a worldwide basis, with effect from 14th July 2003, some changes in the visa application process for all types of non-immigrant visas. Thus, the changes are not specific to India or to student visas. Under the changed visa regime, applicants for all types of non-immigrant visas have to take an appointment for a visa interview at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate except in a few specified cases.

(c) and (d) The government took up the matter with the appropriate authorities. The U.S. authorities have conveyed that their Embassy and Consulates are trying to ensure that the student visa applications are processed before the date the students have to report to their educational institutions in the United States.

Bus service to Lahore

497. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to re-introduce Delhi-Lahore Bus service which was discontinued some time back;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the response of passengers to this service;